

A
S E R M O N
Preached before the
K I N G,
O N
S^t Stephen's-day.

By *ST. PATRICK*, D.D. Chaplain in
Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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A
SERMON

Preached before the

K I N G,

On St. Stephen's day, 1675.

ACT. VII. 59.

*And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God,
and saying, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit.*

O How beautiful is a Succession
of Good things! (as St. Gre-
gory Nyssen cries out in a Ser-
mon on this Festival.) How
sweet is it when one Pleasure transmits us
to another, and the end of the present
is the beginning of a new Satisfaction!
Behold here that which we all so much

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desire

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desire ; *Ἐσφρανίζεσθαι*, Feast after Feast, and Grace upon Grace. Yesterday the Lord of all entertained us ; to day we are invited by the noble Imitator of our Lord. The one feasted us by *putting on* the Man for *us* ; the other by *putting off* the Man for *him* : the one by coming down into the Dungeon of this Life (as he calls it) for our sake ; the other by going out of it for his. O happy life of Christians ! whom their Lord would have to *rejoyce alway* ; and *in every thing to give thanks* ; first for him, and then for those Worthies that followed him.

For next to the most Blessed Redeemer of Mankind, the great Captain of our Salvation, those blessed Saints, who were the great Champions of his holy Truth, challenge our solemn and devout Commemoration. The Christian Religion, which comforts us with such a blessed Hope, was propagated by their means, especially by their Sufferings ; which *filled up* (as St. Paul speaks) *that which was behind, or wanting, of the afflictions of Christ in their*

Col. I. 24.

their flesh. There were no Sufferings wanting indeed to complete Christ's Satisfaction ; but there did some remain to complete the Testimony , which he had begun to give by Blood to the Truth of God. These the Apostles and other Great persons filled up and finished, in those parts of the World where he had not himself in Person appeared. There they published the same Truth for which he died, and testified and confirmed it in the same manner that he had done, by laying down their Life for it : so that in them he still lived, and preached, and wrought wonders , and was persecuted, and despised Death , and subdued the Nations under his feet. *He that overcame death once for us* (says one of these Martyrs) *overcomes it always in us. In us he fights, and in us he conquers. In these combats which we constantly endure, & coronat pariter & coronatur , he both crowns , and is likewise crowned.* They are the words of *Epist. VIII. S. Cyprian.*

Now among all those Triumphant
 B 2 Souls,

Souls, who so honourably witnessed to our Saviour, the most Eminent was this Glorious Martyr *S. Stephen*, whose Memory is this day celebrated; because he was the first who subscribed the Christian Doctrine, and sealed it with his Blood; becoming thereby *Primicerius Martyrum*, (as *S. Aug.* calls him) the Chief, the Prince and Captain of the Martyrs, as Christ is the Prince and Captain of their and our Salvation. Before he had seen any mere Man leading him the way, when there were no footsteps but those of our Saviours, wherein to tread; he led the way himself in a Bloody path, and arrived to the Honour of being the *First-born* of all those whose *Nativities*, that is, Martyrdoms, the Church commemorates with her Praises and Thanksgivings. And this he did in the very first year (as it is most probable) after our Lord's Ascension to the Throne of his Glory; and when he had but newly received Imposition of Hands: *ὡς περ εἰς αὐτὸν τὸτο προεχθελ*, (as *Eusebius* speaks) as if he had been Ordained only for this Ministry, to sacrifice his Life for the Testimony of *Jesus*. It

Lib. 11.
Hist. Eccles.
c. 1.

It is an easie thing, as S. Gregory Nazianzen speaks, φιλοσοφῶν ἔξω κινδύνου, to be a Christian when there is no danger; and when there is, all sufferings are the easier, when we have many Companions, or glorious Examples to encourage us. But it is the singular priviledg, and peculiar glory of this Saint, that Πρῶτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, &c. *He was the first that opened the passage to Greg. Nyss. the quire of Martyrs; the first that resisted Eusebium. unto blood, striving against sin; the first that was adorned (agreeable to his Name) with the crown and diadem of confession.*

It is not my intention, nor will the time permit me to relate the whole story of this great mans sufferings, together with the occasion of them; how he overpowered his Adversaries with the Wisdom and Spirit wherewith he proved Jesus to be the Son of God; how he astonished them with the Wonders and Miracles he did among the people; how he stopt the mouths of those that disputed with him; and how False Witnesses were thereupon suborned to bring in an Accusation

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sation against him : but shall only note the Invincible Resolution, and the Pious Patience of this Blessed Martyr, under all that he endured :

For they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.

Stoning was the heaviest Punishment that the Law of *Moses* enacted against the most grievous Crimes. If a man had blasphemed God, or made his Children pass through the fire to *Moloch*, or committed villany with a Beast, or cursed his Parents (to name none of the rest of those XVIII sorts of sinners who were to be thus used), they could do no more, to shew their detestation of his wickedness, than to dash him against the stones ; and if that did not dispatch him, to throw stones at him till he died. Now when a whole showre of these came pouring down on this Good-mans head, when the blind Multitude ran upon him with such a rage, as if he had been the vilest

vilest creature on Gods earth, it did not move his spirit in the least to any unchristian passion, nor extort from him one angry, one revengeful, one unseemly word. He only commended himself to God, and prayed for his Persecutors, and expressed his hope in Jesus, that when they had beaten his Soul out of his Body, he would receive it unto himself.

And great reason he had for such Hope, being already advanced by the Faith of Christ to such an Heavenly and God-like nature, as to express the greatest love to those who hated him so bitterly; and to expose himself to the greatest danger for the sake of Christian Piety, which he desired by these means to propagate even among its most deadly enemies. And if we rightly consider it, we shall not easily find any thing that so much declares the Greatness, the Excellency (and as I may call it, the Divineness) of any mans spirit, or tends so effectually to promote the Christian Faith, as truly pious Patience under the greatest Sufferings upon its account.

First,

I.

First, I say it is an argument of a great and noble Spirit; it declares more than any thing else, the force and vertue of any mans mind. As Complaints, continual Repinings, and violent Commotions, argue weakness and infirmity: so silent Meekness, chearful Submission, and quiet composed Patience when we suffer wrongfully, speak an Heart indued with strength and fortitude. The World indeed thinks those most powerful, who can do wrong and not be punished for it; they that can irresistably overpower and oppress others, have gained the Titles of Mighty, Illustrious, and Magnanimous: but in a right estimation of things, these Titles belong to such Souls as can suffer all the evil that those men do, with an humble constancy, and meek resignation of themselves to the Will of God. These are the truly Great and Unconquerable Spirits; these ought most to be admired and renowned, for they remain Victorious even over their insulting

ing Enemies : they triumph over those that lead them captive : Who find a stop put to the course of their Conquests, when they meet with such Spirits as cannot be subdued ; nay, are in pain, and inwardly grieved, to see men suffer cheerfully, more than they can lay upon them.

Facit inter pœnas, pœnis suis fortior, &c. says S. Cyprian of Celerinus. ^{Epist. XXXIV.} “ He lay tormented, stronger than “ the torments he indured; freer in prison than they that shut him in ; higher, when flat upon the ground, than they that trampled on him ; more at liberty in chains, than they that bound him ; sublimer by far when condemned, than they that sat on the Bench and judged him.

It was a sublime Spirit indeed that possessed these mens Breasts : for it raised them by these means not only above the common rank of mankind, and above all those who had astonished the World with their Greatness and Power ; but far above those gods whom the Nations worshipped.

shipped. Most of which had left no Records but of their Amours, their Pleasures and Voluptuous Enjoyments ; and none of which had made themselves remarkable for patient Innocence, and pious Passing by injuries, without any thought or desire of revenge. This was a thing proper to the Christian Hero's, as the Martyrs and Confessors may be justly called, who became hereby more than Men ; and, as some of the Ancients ventured to say, more than Angels : *Διὰ τῶν ἐν σώματι ἀγώνων, τὰς ἀσθενειῶν φύσεως ὑπερβαίνοντες*, by the Agonies and Conflicts they endured in their bodies, excelling those Natures which have no bodies, and consequently no such pains and miseries to contend withal, as those Souls (incumbred with Flesh) overcame. Which proclaimed so loudly the Power of the Ineffable Father in them (as *Justin* one of these Martyrs speaks), that they won the hearts of sober Pagans to the Service of that God, who inspired his worshippers with such meek and humble, but resolved and undaunted Spirits. Which is the second thing :

II.

That Christianity was hereby marvel-
lously promoted, and made a great pro-
gress in the World, though this seemed to
be the ready way to extinguish it. *Celsus*
himself, as great an enemy as he was to
Christianity, was put to his shifts, and
forced to quit his former Principles, when
he came to consider the sufferings of the
Martyrs. Though he was an *Epicurean*
in his other Writings, as *Origen* tells us; *Lib. 1. contra*
yet when he set himself to dispute against *Cels.*
Christian Religion, he could not but con-
fess that it was a Generous and Worthy
thing, to lay down their Lives in the De-
fence of it; and, that nothing was more
base, than for a Man to flinch from a true
Opinion for fear of danger. For he goes
on to acknowledg, when he was in this
good mood, "that there is in Man *καὶ τὸ θεῖον*
" *τὸ θεῖον*, something better than his ear-
" thy part; which is, says he, of kin to
" God. And therefore all well-bred
" Souls desire to be near to their Origin-
" al, and would willingly know more

“of him. A worthy Confession, which the power of Truth sometimes extorts from its greatest Enemies. And it was eminently verified in this holy Martyr, of whom we may speak truly in his words, that being well bred (in the School of Christ) *κατὰ ἰσχυρὰ τῶ σωτηρίας*, he desired by all means to be with his Heavenly Kindred. Which he knew would not lessen the Family of Christ here on earth, but rather increase it, and make it more numerous. “For as skilful Wrestlers, says “S. Greg. Nyss. by yielding a little, and “bowing their bodies under those that “contend with them, more easily overthrow them, and lay them flat on the “ground : So did this great Stephen bruise “the mighty Adversary the Devil, by “falling to the earth himself. Then it was that the Apostles were driven away from *Jerusalem*, and began to run throughout the World. This was the occasion of the Publishing of the Word every where, to the ruine of the Devil’s Kingdom. And besides this, his wonderful Piety, and compassionate Kindness even to

to his Persecutors, we may rationally think touch'd some of their Hearts, and made them relent and turn to God. For at that very time when they were murdering him, he like a Spiritual Priest (as the fore-named Father speaks) whose blood was sprinkled against their will before God, interceded with great charity for them, *saying, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

When their brutish fury was a little over, and they reflected on what had passed with some coolness, they could not sure but (some of them) be melted with such ardent love, as well as astonish'd at such rare courage. For in succeeding times, it is certain, Christian Patience had such effect upon many hearts, that it gave a great stroke to their conversion unto Christ. *Justin*, whom I mentioned before, professes, That the first thing that inclined him to the faith of Christ, was the devout constancy which he beheld in those, who suffered for it. And *Tertullian* avows in his Apology to all the Pagan world,

world, that *Cicero, Seneca, Pyrrho, Callinicus*, with all the rest of their great Writers, who had exhorted men to indure pain and death, could never make so many Disciples by their Eloquent words, as simple Christians had done by their deeds. *Illā ipsa obstinatio quam ex probatis, Magistra est.* “That very obstinate Resolution, “which you upbraid us withal, is a Mistress that instructs the world. Who “is there that beholds it, and is not moved “to enquire into the cause? And who is “there that takes the pains to enquire into “the cause, and doth not become a Profelyte to this Religion? and who is there “that becomes a Profelyte to it, and is not “ready also to lose his life for it, that “he may obtain the favour of God with “the expence of his blood?

And indeed it may be questioned whether the Apostles and their followers, did more amaze the world by the wonder of their Miracles, or by their stupendious patience under the most cruel Torments. This, I think, is certain, That the Divine manner

manner of their suffering, was a thing less controverted, than their prodigious astonishing works. They, I mean, who disputed the last, could not but admire and commend the first. They ascribed their Miracles sometime to the power of evil spirits : But their meek and Lamb-like Patience, their tender-hearted Charity to those that hated them, their forgiving their Enemies, their praying for their Persecutors, their blessing those that cursed them, and obliging those that reviled and abused them; these things the Devil himself knew not how to calumniate, no more than he knew how to counterfeit.

His Agents and Factors had not the heart to suffer any thing, but loved their ease and their pleasure; though they appeared with a very strange power of marvels, and signs, and lying wonders. *As Jannes and Jambres, says St. Paul,* ^{2 Tim. 3. 8} *withstood Moses, so did these also resist the Truth, which was preached by the Apostles. That is, as those Egyptian Magicians vied a while with Moses in strange works,*

works, and astonishing operations, whereby they sought to impair his credit with the people : So did these new Juglers contend for some time with the Apostles, and hoped to gain as great admiration, by imitating their Miracles. But they were not more desirous all this time to shew themselves in mighty works, than they were craftily careful to shun all pain and trouble for their cause. For it is expressly noted as a part of their Character by the same *St. Paul, Philip. III. 18.* that they were *Enemies to the Cross of Christ*, in which the Apostles gloried and rejoyced, *II Cor. XII. 9, 10.*

And here it will not be unfit to note these two things :

I. First, That what glory soever there was in Miracles (as they did at last so outshine all Imposters, that they quite eclipsed them, no less than *Moses* did the Magicians), it never appeared more illustrious, than when the Apostles exercised perfect patience under the sorest distresses.

Then

Then the Divine vertue in them broke out, and shone most brightly. *When they were weak, then were they strong*, as *St. Paul* speaks in the place forenamed. When they were crushed by the power of their Enemies, then they most amazed them, by discovering this mighty power of Christ in such weak and earthen Vessels. What could be more astonishing, than to see those who were fast manacled and fettered, unloose their own and others bands, shake the foundations of Prisons, open without any Key, or other Instrument, the Doors which were strongly lock'd and barr'd upon them: Nay, unchain not only fast-bound bodies, but also miserably inthralled Souls? Was it not a great wonder to see Jaylors come and crouch to those whom they had newly scourged; desiring to be unbound and absolved by their chained Captives, and yeilding themselves voluntary Prisoners to those, whom they had violently kept in durance? Yet this we read in the Story of the blessed *St. Paul*, *Act. XVI*, who then triumphed when he sate in the

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Stocks ; then appeared illustrious, when he was thrust into a Dungeon (for that's the meaning of the *inner Prison* there mentioned); then was highly honoured, infomuch that they were ready to kiss his Stripes, when he was treated as a man of no account.

Here the Apostles and their Successors left all their opposers far behind them, who fled from dangers, and timorously avoided all pain and trouble, or endured them with a base and abject Spirit, which sunk when it wanted the peoples breath to blow it up. They were far from *taking pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses*; having no hopes to win any glory by this means, as St. Paul did : who demonstrated his Apostleship *in all patience, as well as in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*, II Cor. XII. 10. 12.

But true Patience is such an admirable property, that the Devil hath
not

not the power to attain so much as a shadow of it. It is too beautiful for his deformed nature, and crooked disposition : being a composition of all those lovely virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit, to which he is a perfect stranger. He can sometime transform himself into an Angel of Light; but when do we find him in the form of a truly resigned and contented sufferer? This is the unalienable Prerogative of Christ; and the great Champions of his Faith, who with such a Charity as *St. Paul* describes, *I Cor. XIII. 4, 5, 6, 7.* (every property of which is the Character of Patience, as *Tertullian* hath truly observed) endured all the contempt, hatred and cruelty of the world; accounting it a great honour and gain (no disparagement or damage at all) to be vile, and to lose all they had, for the sake of their Dear Lord and Master Christ Jesus.

There did, it is true, arise in after
Ages such sturdy Spirits (for instance
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the *Circumcellions*, a part of the *Donatists* Faction) as would endure any thing with a barbarous resolution, for the credit of those Dotages wherewith they troubled the world: But they were wholly void of that ancient Spirit, which had ever been in Christian sufferers. They had nothing of that *Modestissima Patientia* (as the Author of the Book *de Duplici Martyrio* speaks) that most Modest Patience wherewith Christian Religion inspired its followers. *Illud placidum, illud mansuetum, &c.* That sweet, that soft, that gentle and tender, that humbly sublime (as his Phrase is) and sublimely humble Spirit, was no where to be found but among the Martyrs; who never spake a worse word, when they were condemned, than *Deo gratias*, thanks be to God; which was the common form wherein they received their Sentence from the mouth of their Judges:

That's the *second* thing I have to add,

II.

II. That when some Impostors endeavoured to imitate the resolution of the Apostles and Martyrs, in exposing even their lives for the sake of their vain imaginations, they were not able to imitate them at all in the Divine manner of their sufferings. It is excellently said by St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his Funeral Oration for his Father, That this blessed Martyr St. Stephen offered to God a greater thing than Death, *viz.* Long-suffering, meekness, and forgiving of his Enemies. He opposed, as the other Gregory speaks, *τὸ θυμὸν τῆς μακροθυμίας*, &c. to their anger a patient spirit, to their threats silence, to their hatred ardent love, to their malignity good will, to their false accusations preaching of the Truth. If the false Apostles and other pretenders, could have appeared in this handsom dress, their delusion had been very dangerous: But here they halted, and knew not how to follow the genuine Disciples of Christ Jesus.

Their

Their hardiness, as *St. Austin* speaks of the surly Sect before-mentioned (many of which would kill themselves, and force others to kill them), was to be admired, for it was very great: but their patience was not to be admired, for it was none at all. They suffered much evil, that they might do the more. They cared not what others did to them; but withal, they cared not what they did to others.

This was a remarkable difference, which is all the time will give me leave to mention, between the Christian Martyrs and their Counterfeits: The one were meek, the other angry and furious. The one humble, the other haughty. The one ready to do good to those by whom they suffer'd, the other desirous of revenge. The one loved their Enemies, the other only condemn'd them. The one were forward to excuse their folly, the other to aggravate and upbraid them with it.

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The one smiled upon their persecutors and blessed them, the other look'd as if they would pour out Anathema's, and excommunicate them from all their charitable thoughts. Nothing was more peaceable and quiet than the one, while the other were tumultuous and violent. The Martyrs were submissive and easily govern'd, but the other were boisterous and violent. It was proper to the former to appear with a modest cheerfulness, and a humble confidence; but the other seemed to be surly rather than well satisfied; bold, rather than well assured.

And therefore no wonder that these Holy Souls so mightily prevailed over all the powers of darkness, in what shape soever they appeared; and that they overcame, as *St. John* writes, *the Dragon, that old Serpent the Devil, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, not loving their lives unto the death.* And no wonder also, they had such a lively hope in God,
and

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*De Exhort.
Martyrii.*

and could look up so stedfastly to Jesus, as this blessed Martyr did, expecting that he would receive their Spirits, with the kindest affection unto himself: For they had attained to the Baptism wherewith he the King of glory was Baptized: A Baptism (as St. Cyprian calls Martyrdom) *In gratia majus, in potestate sublimius, &c.* In grace greater, in power more sublime, in honour more precious. A Baptism in which the Angels baptize, in which God and his Christ rejoyce. A baptism after which no man sins; which consummates the encrease of our faith; and parting us from the world, straight-way unites us to God. In the baptism of water is received remission of sins; but in this of blood, the Crown of Virtues.

And a very noble Crown sure it was, that such faithful followers might hope to receive from the hands of so gracious a Master. For being so much advanced above the world while they were in it, and having done him such eminent

nent Service ; they could not doubt of his favour in lifting them up to live with himself in exceeding great bliss, when his Enemies would not permit them to live here any longer. If there were any thrones higher than other, in those heavenly places, where St. Stephen saw our Saviour, they might very well expect to be promoted to them ; to reign with him there in endless glory, and to be honoured here on earth with perpetual praises.

I.

For from all this you cannot but see how fit and just it is, that we should make most solemn commemorations of those, to whom the Christian world stands so deeply obliged : and that the Church should give a kind of first-fruits of them unto this glorious Martyr, whom St. Gregory Naz. calls *Orat. XXII.*
Ἀπαρχὴ τῶν μετὰ Χριστὸν πασχόντων, the first fruits of those who suffered after Christ. This the ancient Christians did with so great affection, that their Enemies calumniated

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ated it, and said: they worshipped them. No, says St. Cyril in his VI Book against *Julian* (where he justifies this practice excellently; and therefore give me leave to contract a long discourse he hath about it), "There is no
 " *Adorationis* Man-worship among Chri-
 " tians. For we have not made a God
 " of a Man, nor adore one that is not
 " by nature God, when we worship
 " Christ himself. But acknowledging
 " that man, who appeared to be the
 " Word of God, by whom all things
 " were made, we go to him as God;
 " for so he is. As for the Martyrs, we
 " neither call them Gods, nor give
 " them any Divine Worship: Yet we
 " cannot but honour them; or rather
 " we crown them *ταῖς ἀνωτάτοις τιμαῖς*, with
 " the highest honours: As those who
 " have generously contended for the
 " truth, and resolutely preserved the
 " purity of our Faith, and propounded
 " themselves as certain Images of that
 " so much admired fortitude and gallan-
 " try to all the world. There can be
 " no "

"no absurdity in it; but rather it is
 "necessary, that they who excelled in
 "such famous deeds, should be crowned
 "with endless honour. Did not com-
 "mon reason teach the ancient *Greeks*
 "as much? For those that hazarded
 "their lives at *Marathon* for the safety
 "of their Country, and those that stoutly
 "opposed the Army of *Xerxes* in after-
 "times, the *Athenians* were wont,
 "meeting together every year at their
 "Graves, to crown with their Enco-
 "miums and high commendations, as
 "men that dyed a glorious death.
 "And your *Plato* says, That they who
 "live excellently and dye bravely,
 "should be honoured as more than men,
 "and their Tombs become venerable. It
 "is no wonder then that we account the
 "Holy Martyrs worthy *aidis anion* of all
 "respect and reverence, and that we ho-
 "nour their very Monuments; making
 "a perpetual never-fading commemora-
 "tion of them, serve in stead of a small
 "recompence of such illustrious vertue.
 Thus He.

And it is very well known how, in those days, their names were solemnly rehearsed in the Publick Liturgies of the Church. Which custom, though it be not still continued, yet their memory is ever precious; we honour them with due praise; we make mention of their noble deeds with hearty thanksgivings to God for them: *Laudamus, glorificamus, admiramur, &c.* (to speak in the words of St. *Austin*, or whoever he was that wrote the Book *de excidio urbis*), *we praise, we glorifie, we admire the holy Martyrs; we celebrate their days with a pious solemnity; we venerate their worth, and as far as we can we imitate them, and endeavour to do as they did.* For by their zealous labours and sufferings, Infidels were converted, lapsed Christians recovered, the doubtful confirmed, the luke-warm inflamed, the fervour of the pious doubled; and all Posterity excited both to adore the power of the Divine Grace in them, and also to hope in God for the like Grace, to help in time of need.

Those

Those are the two reasons St. Basil gives *In XL. Mar-*
 why those that loved the Martyrs were ^{tyrs.}
 so unwearied in their commemoration
 of them, Because the honour which is
 given to our pious fellow-servants, is a
 demonstration of our affection to our
 common Master : And he that entertains
 brave men with due respect, will not
 fail to imitate them on the like oc-
 casion.

II.

And that I must needs say, is the
 greatest honour we can do them, to
 propound them always to our selves as
 our patterns, and to follow them in their
 constant love to God, to Religion, and
 to all Mankind ; whatsoever we suffer
 for it. True Christian Piety and Ver-
 tue, if we will allow the Martyrs to
 have had any judgment, is the most va-
 luable thing in the whole world ; for
 they preferred it before their lives. And
 therefore all Infidelity is a direct reproach
 to those blessed Souls ; representing them
 as a company of rash Zealots, that threw
 away.

away their lives for a fancy: And all vice and wickedness is a constant manifest scorn and contempt of their Sanctity, as the foolish strictness of those who understood not their liberty. If we will honour them, we must heartily believe and obey that Gospel which they preached and asserted with their blood. We must endeavour, as one under the name of St. Cyprian speaks, *Ut tota etiam vita Martyrium, hoc est testimonium Deo reddat*; that our whole life may be a Martyrdom; that is, a testimony unto God. Let it testify that we own him, that we remember him, that we fear and reverence him, and that we love him, and esteem his love and favour more than life it self. Let it witness how much we love his will better than our own; and what a Grace we think it, that he hath taught us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. Those lusts (called *worldly*, because they are so common) are the Persecutors, which now we are to conflict withal,

withal, as the Martyrs did with other Enemies. Here is now the trial of our Vertue; here is the proof our Fidelity; these put us to the test, whether we will stick to our Lord and Master, or yeild to their desires. *Si deest Tyrannus, si tortor, si spoliator, &c.* as St. Austin speaks; though there be no Tyrant (blessed be God in these peaceable days), no Tormentor, no Plunderer; yet evil desires are never wanting, to afford daily occasion of Martyrdom. For it is a kind of death (*sine cruore Martyrium*, in the Phrase of Sulpitius, a Martyrdom without blood: *occultum Martyrium*, in the language of St. Ambrose, a secret unseen Martyrdom) to suppress all desires of sinful pleasures; to bear with the unkind censures of the envious, and the reproaches of the malicious; to forbear revenge, when a fair opportunity is offered; to stifle all motions of anger, and wrath, and discontent, and hatred, and pride, vain-glory and ambition, when there are constant provocations, and strong temptations to them. These are the evil affections

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ctions we must manfully resist and crucifie: and when they are dead, it will not be hard for us, by the Grace of God, to dye too, if need be, for our Saviour's sake.

III.

And now especially (which is the last thing) let every one of our lives give a testimony to God, and do honour to his Religion; when we solemnly commemorate (as we do at this time of the year) both the wonderful great Love of our Lord the Eternal Son of God, in becoming a man for us, and the love also which the Martyrs, those rational whole burnt-offerings (as *Greg. Naz.* calls them), those perfect Sacrifices, those acceptable Oblations, expressed to him, in dying for his Service. Let us now carefully avoid all things contrary to our profession; all riot and luxury, drunkenness and revelling, chambering and wantonness, foolish (that is filthy, lascivious) talking and jesting: For these things, saith the Apostle, *are not convenient* (do not agree with Christianity): *but rather giving of thanks* for God's inestimable

mable benefits bestowed on us, *V. Eph. 4. Seccine exprimitur publicum gaudium per publicum dedecus, &c.* (as *Tertullian* speaks of the Pagan Festivities), *Is this the way to express a publick joy by a publick shame? Do those things become our solemn days, which are unfit to be done at any time? Valde absurdum est* (to use also the words of *St. Hierom*) *velle nimia saturitate honorare Martyrem, quem scimus Deo placuisse jejuniis.* It is extremely absurd to think to honour the Martyr by excess, who we know pleased God by fastings: To celebrate his memory, meerly with Plays, and Sports and Merriment, who we know was acceptable to our Lord, by devout Prayers, Praises and Thanksgivings: To keep his day after the Heathenish fashion, whose Martyrdom was the destruction of error (as the forenamed Greek Father speaks), the persecution of Vice, the drowning of Sin, and the cleansing of the world.

Not that it is unfit now to Feast and recreate our selves: for it is never more
F seasonable,

seasonable, nor more safe, to feast and refresh our bodies, than when at such solemnities we have feasted our Souls. We can never be better disposed, nor better understand how to use God's blessings thankfully, soberly, and charitably, than when he is fresh in our thoughts, and we have been commemorating his marvellous bounty to us all. And therefore after the Psalms and Hymns wherewith they anciently praised God for the Martyrs; there followed in many places, ~~consecrated exercises~~ (as the great *Constantine* speaks) most sober feasts of Christian good-fellowship; wherein the poor were fed; and all enmities buried. Nor did they think it an unfit expression of their joy, to dance at the Sepulchres of the Martyrs, ~~in dress of holiness~~ with Godly and Religious dances; as both *St. Basil* and his great Friend so often mentioned, expressly tell us. And is it not possible for us to separate such innocent things from that intemperance and wantonness, which at last robbed the Martyrs of this part of their honour, and caused these customs to

*Ad Sanct.
Calum.
C. 12.*

*Hom. in
Barlaam.*

Carm. 63.

to be abolished? Let us but so devoutly attend upon the Divine Service on such days, as to carry away a sense of God in our mind; and the business is done. That will sufficiently secure us, and preserve us from danger. Whatsoever we do, we shall express the Character which *Clemens Alexandrinus* gives of his wise Christian, who, he says, is *σπουδὴ ἀμὰ καὶ ἡσυχίᾳ* *Strom. L. is πᾶσι*, at the same time both grave and merry in all things. Grave, because he remembers God: and merry, because of the many good things which he enjoys by the favour of God.

For all which his Holy Name be praised, as well as for his Spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; To whom with the Father and the Holy-Ghost, be all honour, thanksgiving, love and faithful service both now and evermore. *Amen.*

THE END.

